



2020 UK Update Report on the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights for Businesses Operating in Complex or Fragile Environments

This update report details the work which the United Kingdom undertook in 2020 to implement the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPs). As a member of the Voluntary Principles Initiative (VPI), the UK is required to produce an annual update report every year and a full report every three years on its work to implement the VPs. The last full UK annual report, covering 2018, was published on 22 March 2019.

Implementation of the VPs

In March 2020, in accordance with the governance rules of the Voluntary Principles Initiative (VPI) – the body that promotes the implementation of the VPs – the UK rotated off the Steering Committee. Since then, the UK has continued to be an active government member of the VPI. Between January and March 2020, the UK participated in the VPI Steering Committee and helped the body take key decisions, including on the move to a virtual annual Plenary meeting in March, in response to the global coronavirus pandemic, and on events to mark the 20th anniversary of the VPs, and supported the development of VPI outreach materials.

The UK participated in Government Pillar meetings, and supported further governance reforms on the role of the Chair and the introduction of Vice-Chairs. The UK also supported efforts to create a new partnership framework between the VPI and the In-Country Working Groups (ICWGs), through responding to a consultation process and discussion in Pillar meetings.

Throughout the year, the UK met informally with UK members of the corporate, Non-Government Organisations (NGO), and Observer pillars. The informal UK VPI working group, chaired by the FCDO, also met twice in 2020.

Promotion and Implementation

While the Coronavirus pandemic meant that some UK engagement and UK-funded projects were necessarily delayed or amended in some form, UK diplomatic missions have continued to support VP implementation in-country.

In the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, the British Embassy continued to be an active member of the VP's National Working Group, which sustained its engagement with the Government of DRC. The Government of DRC has stated an intention to join the VPI, and designated a point of contact within the Ministry of Human Rights to develop a plan of action to achieve full membership status. The

British Embassy will continue working with the Government and other international partners on the process for the DRC to become a full member of the VPI.

In **Guatemala**, the British Embassy continued to develop and co-chair the Working Group (WG) throughout 2020, which it had helped to establish in 2019. The WG welcomed a representative of a mining company, the first extractive industry member, to the group. The WG met the newly elected government authorities and discussed the impacts of the pandemic in the operations of private security companies. The WG, with support from the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) funded by the UK, began discussions on a roadmap to help establish its objectives and long-term goals. In November, the Embassy hosted a webinar on the VPs for Guatemala and Honduras as part of Business and Human Rights week. The webinar generated increased interest from private security companies on the VPs.

In **Nigeria**, the British High Commission continued to be an active participant in the WG. The WG engaged with and lobbied six Federal Government Ministries, including Justice and Interior, on the VPs. As a result, the Ministries reaffirmed their commitment to and support for the VPs' objectives, including the appointment of dedicated desk officers to lead the Federal Government's engagement with the WG. In December, the British High Commission discussed the VPs with the Nigerian National Human Rights Institute, which forms part of the National Human Rights Commission, which also reiterated their commitment for the VPs. The British High Commission will continue to promote and enhance implementation of the VPs with stakeholders, including hosting a meeting at a Human Rights Coordination group meeting in January 2021, which will serve as an opportunity to discuss its collective approach to the VPs and the impact of Covid-19 on its work.

In **Peru**, the British Embassy continued its work to promote the VPs with the WG in Lima and through project funding, supported the WG in Cusco to reinforce its presence and advocacy in the context of social conflicts in the region and surrounding areas. Work continued on the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, which is due to complete in 2021. In December, the British Embassy ran a workshop for members of the WG with the National Police and security companies. The workshop focused on the rule of law, the use of force, and the institutional strengthening of the National Police training. The WG engagement has helped consolidate it as a key partner in support of the Government of Peru's efforts to implement the VPs. In November, the WG in Lima delivered an online training course to 50 companies on Business and Human Rights and the importance of UN Guiding Principles and VPs. The course broadened understanding on the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, including the role of VPs and implementation.

Projects

In 2020, the UK continued to work with DCAF, including through the Security and Human Rights Implementation Mechanism (SHRIM), the multi-donor fund established by the UK in 2016 in partnership with DCAF and other international partner states to support security, development, and human rights in fragile contexts, including VP implementation. UK funding in 2019/20 supported delivery

of the following projects between January and March in 2020. Building on the UK's funding to the SHRIM, other donor support further amplified the benefits of the UK's contribution throughout 2020:

- **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC):** The SHRIM supported the field implementation of three VPs Regional Working Groups (RWG), Bukavu (South Kivu), Lubumbashi (Haut Katanga), and newly created Kolwezi (Lualaba). The RWG in Lubumbashi increased their capacity to intervene in incidents on security and human rights. In February, the RWG conducted a field mission to a mining company's site to assess the security and human rights risks of illegal mining activity, and provided recommendations on its private and public security arrangements. As a result of the visit, the mining company's representative will participate in future WG meetings. In Lualaba, the RWG conducted a baseline study to identify the security and human rights challenges in the region and to sensitise stakeholders about the RWG. In South Kivu, the RWG intervened in several instances of security and human rights tensions surrounding artisanal and small-scale mining and large scale mining sites, and facilitated the reduction of tension and disciplinary action against security forces. The RWG will continue its outreach efforts with stakeholders, and will conduct a field mission in 2021 to establish a multi-stakeholder dialogue to resolve human rights issues associated with mining. In 2020, UK funding also supported the development of a 'train-the-trainer' curriculum on the VPs for mining police. While the training did not take place because of Covid-19 restrictions, DCAF and the South Kivu RWG will pursue the finalisation of this course in 2021.
- **Kenya:** The final phase of a 'train the trainer' project was delivered to 16 police instructors to equip them with the skills and knowledge to deliver onward training on VP implementation to a further 80 counterparts. The impact of the training brought positive change to participants' confidence and understanding of the use of force and communication skills to de-escalate tense situations.
- **Madagascar:** DCAF, partnered with a local expert, finalised and presented findings from a baseline study on the regulation of Private Security Companies to the Ministry of Interior and Decentralisation, with the aim that this informs Madagascar's public policy dialogue on draft legislation. DCAF supported the organisation of an in-depth workshop for the Ministry to discuss the incorporation of security and human rights good practice into the draft law. The workshop drew on the VPs, the International Code of Conduct, and the Montreux Document. A civil society roundtable workshop will be held in 2021 to share the findings of the study, build capacities of civil society organisations, and ensure a consultative process in the development of the draft law.
- **Peru:** The SHRIM supported the RWG in the Macro Sur region to address social tensions that arose in the summer of 2020 resulting from the Covid situation exacerbating community expectations and tensions with international mining sites in the region. The RWG delivered a series of human rights training courses to build dialogue between the police,

communities, businesses, and journalists. The RWG hosted several meetings with community leaders and other local stakeholders to build capacity, raise awareness of the VPs, and discuss the social conflicts in the mining corridors of Las Bambas, Espinar, and Chumbivilca. The impact of the training and meetings served as an opportunity to start building trust among stakeholders, exchange experiences, and enable participatory processes to discuss human rights challenges in the region.

Separately through the UK's role on the SHRIM's Executive Committee, the UK also supported the disbursement of the SHRIM's Security and Human Rights Grant, which developed civil society organisation capabilities to engage on human rights in the following instances:

- **In Colombia**, a diagnostic study was conducted on existing legislation for the protection and prevention of violence against human rights defenders in the region of La Guajira. The study was published in December, and informed the development of a toolkit to support stakeholders to implement policies around protection and the prevention of violence. A toolkit was developed for use by companies, local government, national government, and human rights defenders.
- In **Timor-Leste**, field research, interviews, and focus groups were organised on the risks of the Tasi Mane Petroleum Infrastructure Project for women in the communities, to raise public awareness and increase participation to influence policy. Funding also supported a local NGO's engagement with the public security and government regulators on the new security legislation relating to policing. A conference was held to discuss the new legislation with the National Police Force. This resulted in renewed interest within the National Parliament to consult further on these issues.

Public and Private Security

The VPs provide a framework for businesses to co-operate in the implementation of security measures by public and private security providers. The UK encourages extractive companies working with public security to use the VPs as a method to reduce and ultimately eliminate human rights incidents.

Throughout 2020, the UK continued to engage with the International Code of Conduct Association for Private Security Providers (ICOCA) through the UK's role as a Board Director and member of ICOCA. The UK supported ICOCA's increased focus on the gendered aspects of conflict, including through its webinar on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in October, 20 years after the first UN Security Council Resolution on WPS. More broadly, the UK supported work on the expansion of the government membership criteria to encourage more participation and diversity from non-Montreux Document States.

The ICOCA Annual General Assembly (AGA), in December, marked ten years since the creation of the International Code of Conduct (ICOC) for Private Security Providers to raise standards in the private security industry. The UK, a founding member of the ICOC, participated in AGA discussions on the goals, objectives and

challenges for future years. The UK also engaged in outreach meetings to encourage membership from Montreux Document supporting countries.

The UK has continued to work with the Security in Complex Environments Group (SCEG), a Special Interest Group for UK-based Private and Maritime Security Companies. This has included UK Government participation in SCEG Executive Committee and wider member meetings and an event on Afghanistan in November to share best practice with private security providers conducting operations in Afghanistan.

In July, the FCDO convened a meeting between Whitehall Government Departments and Executive Committee members of SCEG to support increased cooperation and to build on our collective work to raise standards in the private security sector.